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The Story of SALT

How We Ignore Moscow's Treaty Violations

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The clamor for arms control agreements with the Soviets—which never goes away entirely—is now approaching a fever pitch.

Anti-nuclear demonstrators are doing their thing up at the United Nations; advocates of a "nuclear freeze" continue to push that notion in a hundred forums; and office-holders of all persuasions are casting about for arms control proposals that will appease the mounting furies.

The assumption behind all this is that it is both possible and desirable to arrive at an agreement with the Kremlin that will slow, cut back or halt the production of nuclear weapons by both sides in the arms race. Either we can trust the Kremlin to abide by such a compact, or else we can load it up with safeguards that will fend off the Soviet yen for cheating.

On the historical record, there is no evidence that either of these assumptions is correct. Instead, as spelled out by former CIA and Senate intelligence expert David Sullivan in a monograph on the SALT accords (*The Bitter Fruit of SALT*), exactly the opposite has been the case; the Soviets can't be trusted to abide by such agreements, and the alleged safeguards built into previous treaties have not protected U.S. interests.

Sullivan's study, published by the Texas Policy Institute (6250 Westpark, Suite 110, Houston, Tex. 77057, \$3), pulls together the considerable public data going to show that Moscow not only violated the SALT I agreements, but adroitly used the treaty and negotiating process to forge ahead with a strategic build-up while we marked time — thereby shifting the strategic balance dramatically against us.

Among other violations of the SALT I agreements, Sullivan notes, the Soviets have substituted "heavy" missiles for "light" ones, camouflaged their ICBM testing and encoded missile telemetry, constructed added strategic submarines, and failed to deactivate old missiles according to the agreed-upon schedule. In addition, they have committed several violations of the anti-missile treaty that accompanied the SALT agreement.

U.S. official response to these violations has ranged from weak to non-existent. The pattern of Soviet transgressions has been downplayed under the past four national administrations, with our own officials often ignoring, explaining away, or even deliberately concealing the evidence of Soviet violations, rather than making a major public issue of it. Our reluctance to blow the whistle on Soviet cheating has been documented by the *New York Times*, former Defense Secretary Melvin Laird and Sen. Jake Garn (R.-Utah), among others.

In 1979, Garn pointed out that the Soviets had developed ABM capabilities, constructed additional ABM management radars, tested SAM missiles in an ABM Mode, put canvas covers over missile silo doors and tested decoy submarines—all in violation of SALT I. Suppression of the facts about these violations, he said, "has gone on not just in this Administration but through previous administrations. I believe it is deliberate."

Part of the explanation for this bizarre performance is that the "safeguards" we supposedly rely on amount to very little. Thus Henry Kissinger told us at the time of SALT I that "assurances" had been obtained concerning Soviet behavior. It turned out that these were "unilateral statements" by the U.S.—tailored for domestic consumption in America, utterly worthless as a checkrein on the Soviets.

Even when Moscow blatantly violated the treaty, however—as when it moved from "light" to "heavy" missiles—we haven't raised a fuss about it. Instead, in 1975, we meekly conceded the Soviet alibi that the "heavy" missiles were really "light" ones, after all—thereby shoving the problem under the rug. Similar behavior continues under the Reagan Administration, despite the efforts of Garn and others to call the problem to the President's attention.

Why would U.S. administrations, including this one, ignore something as dangerous as systematic Soviet cheating on an arms agreement? An answer is provided by Ambassador Seymour Weiss: "Once a democracy has committed itself to a major, formal arms control treaty... finding a partner in violation of that treaty tends to undermine its own foreign policy. It amounts to an admission of past failure. Violations—and their political as well as their military applications—must be explained to the electorate and one's allies.... The violation must be made to go away. It did not occur, or, if it did, it was a passing aberration.... At all costs, the process of arms control must be protected."

Whatever the motivation, the facts of record here are plain: (a) The Soviets have systematically shredded previous arms agreements, and (b) safeguards allegedly built in to protect our interests have conspicuously not done so. What reason is there to believe another such agreement will be different? ■